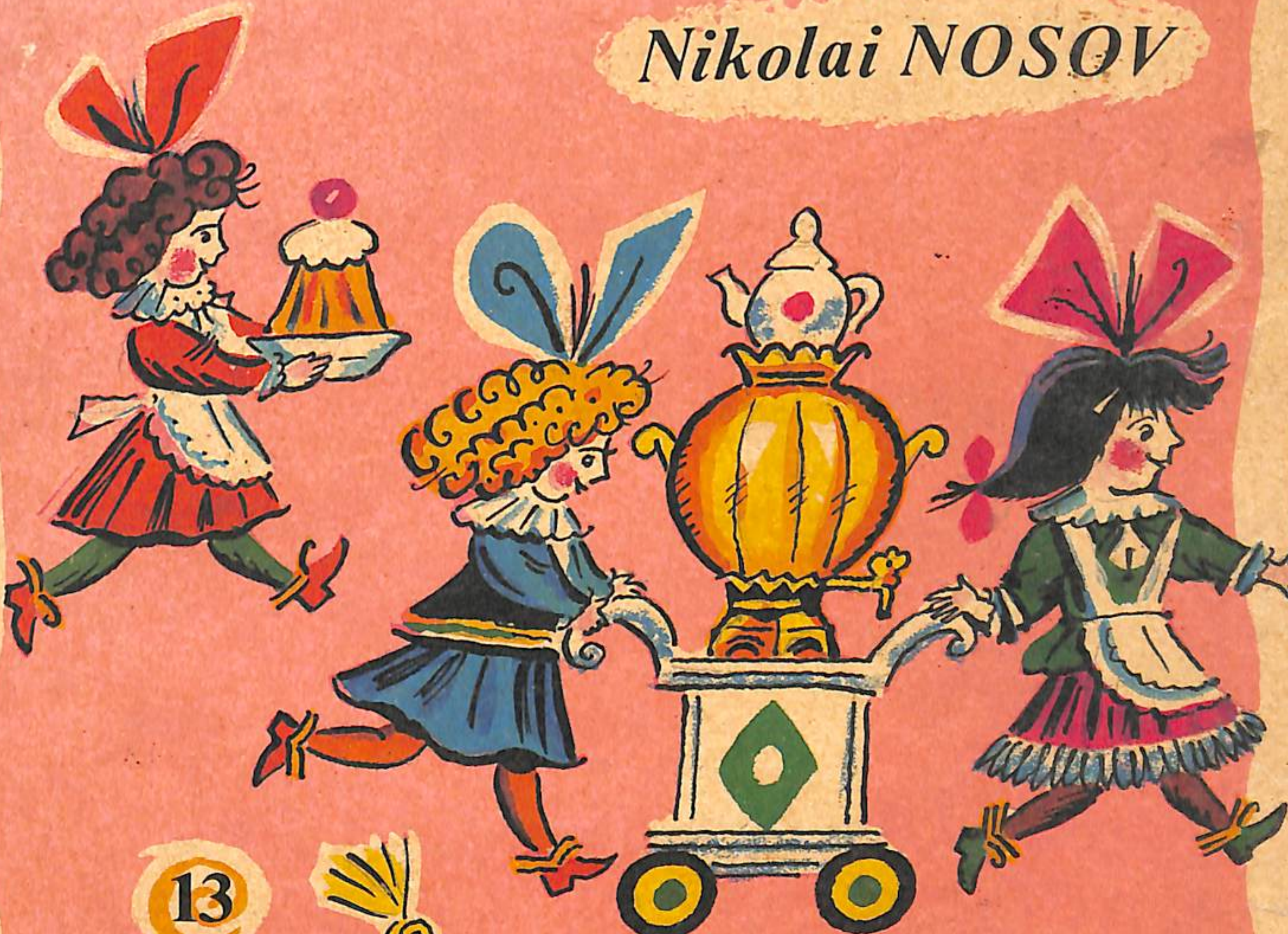
DUNNO'S ADVENTURES

Nikolai NOSOV



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DUNNO TELLS of His Adventures

RADUGA PUBLISHERS



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DUNNO TELLS OF HIS ADVENTURES

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RADUGA PUBLISHERS
MOSCOW





Dunno got dressed quickly and went up the creaking wooden staircase to the second floor. He found himself in a room that was somewhat smaller but much cosier than the one downstairs. Two fan-shaped windows hung with pretty curtains looked out on the street. Between the windows was a door that opened on to a balcony. In the middle of the room stood a table with all sorts of plates and platters on it filled with pies, cakes, cookies, tarts, doughnuts, macaroons, and many other delicious things. It was clear that the girl-Mites had decided to give Dunno a feast. His head fairly swam when he looked at the table.

The girl-Mite with the bow on top of her head and the one with the pigtails were pouring out tea, while the curly-head was taking some sweets out of the sideboard.

Cornflower introduced Dunno to her friends. The girl-Mite

with the pigtails was named Chippy, the one with the bow – Bunny, and the curly-head – Flitty. Dunno wanted nothing so much as to sit down and eat, but four more little girls came in and he had to be introduced to them.

"These are our neighbours: Minny, Winny, Margy and Fluff," said Cornflower.

Dunno found himself surrounded by girl-Mites.

"Did you come here in a balloon?" asked the black-haired Minny.

"Yes, I did," said Dunno importantly, one eye on the table.

"Weren't you afraid to go up in a balloon?" asked the fat little Fluff.

"Terribly... er ... that is ... not the least little bit!" said Dunno.

"How brave you are! I wouldn't go up in a balloon for anything in the world!" said Winny.

"Where do you come from?" asked Margy.

"Flower Town."

"Where's that?"

"Out there," said Dunno, waving his hand vaguely. "Beyond Cucumber River."

"I never heard of such a river," said Minny. "It must be awfully far away."

"Awfully," agreed Dunno.

"Do come to the table before the tea gets cold," said Cornflower.

Dunno did not have to be asked twice. In a second he was in his place and stuffing his mouth with pies and cakes and jam and sweets. His companions ate almost nothing, so anxious were they to hear all about the balloon. At last Flitty could restrain herself no longer.

"Who had the idea of sailing up in the air in a balloon?" she asked.

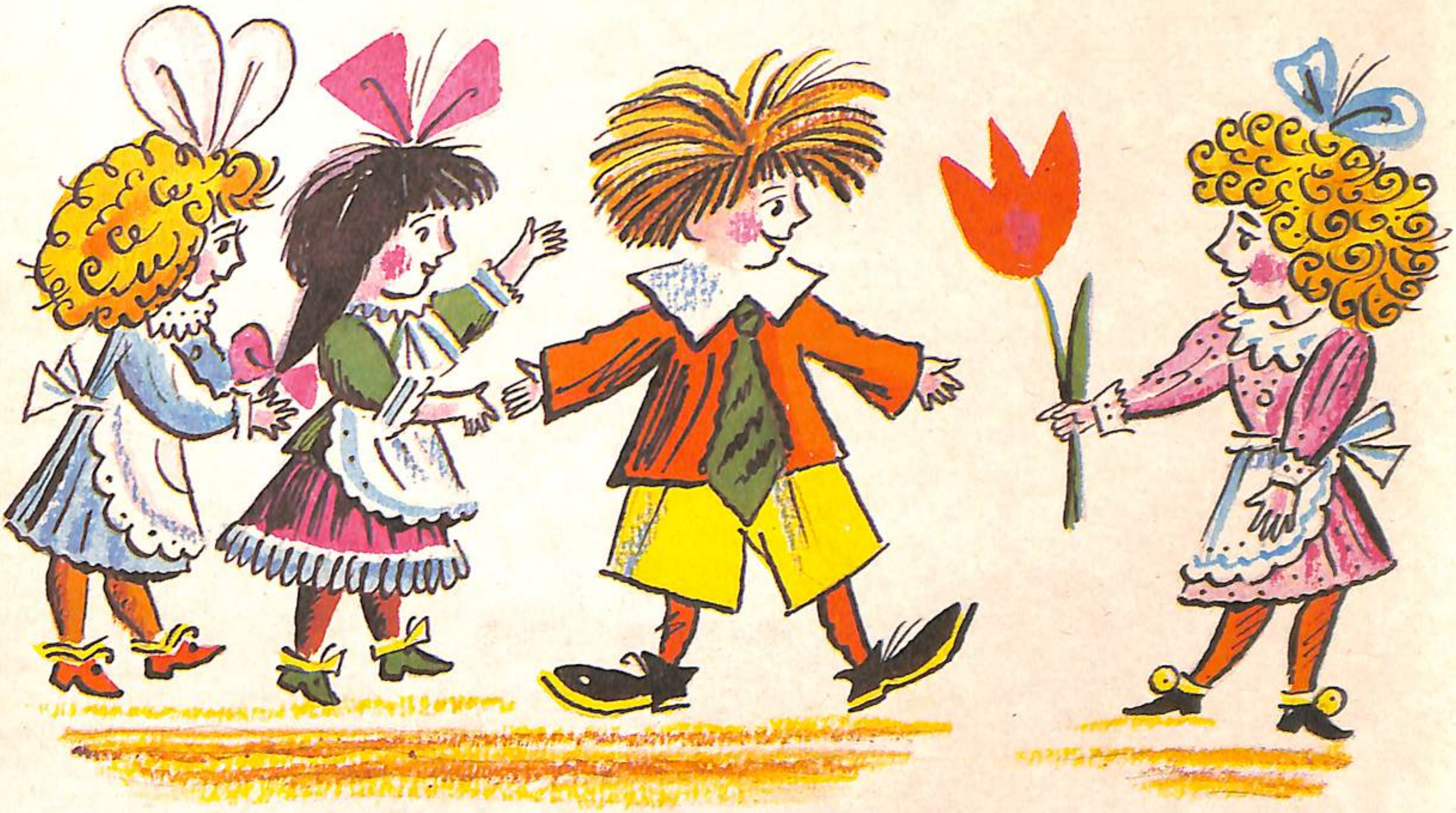
"I did," said Dunno, working his jaws with all his might as he gobbled up one cake after another.

"You don't say so! Was it really you?" came from all sides of the table.

"Word of honour!" said Dunno, almost choking over a raisin.

"How very interesting! Tell us all about it," said Fluff.

"What's there to tell?" said Dunno with a shrug of his shoulders. "The Mites kept after me to think of something for them to do. 'Do think of something,' they kept saying. 'I'm sick of thinking of things for you,' I said, 'think of something yourselves.'



'Us?' they said. 'As if we could think of anything! It's you who has the brains! It's easy as pie for you to think of things!' 'Very well,' I said, 'I s'pose I'll have to.' And so I began to think."

With a look of deep concentration, Dunno fell to chewing a slice of jam tart. The girl-Mites watched him impatiently. When it was finished and he stretched out his hand for another slice, Chippy could stand it no longer.

"You were saying that you ... er ... began to think..." she said.

"So I did," said Dunno, bringing the slice of tart down on the table with the air of one who has just been wakened out of a dream. "For three days and three nights I thought, and at the end of that time I said to my friends: 'I've thought of something, you chaps! I've thought of a balloon!' And so we set about making a balloon. Posey (there's a poet by that name where I come from) – Posey has even written a poem about me. It begins: 'Our Dunno has made a balloon...' or perhaps: 'A balloon has been made by our Dunno...' or rather: 'Ours the balloon that Dunno has made...' Dash! I've forgotten how it begins. So many poems have been written about me I get them all mixed up."

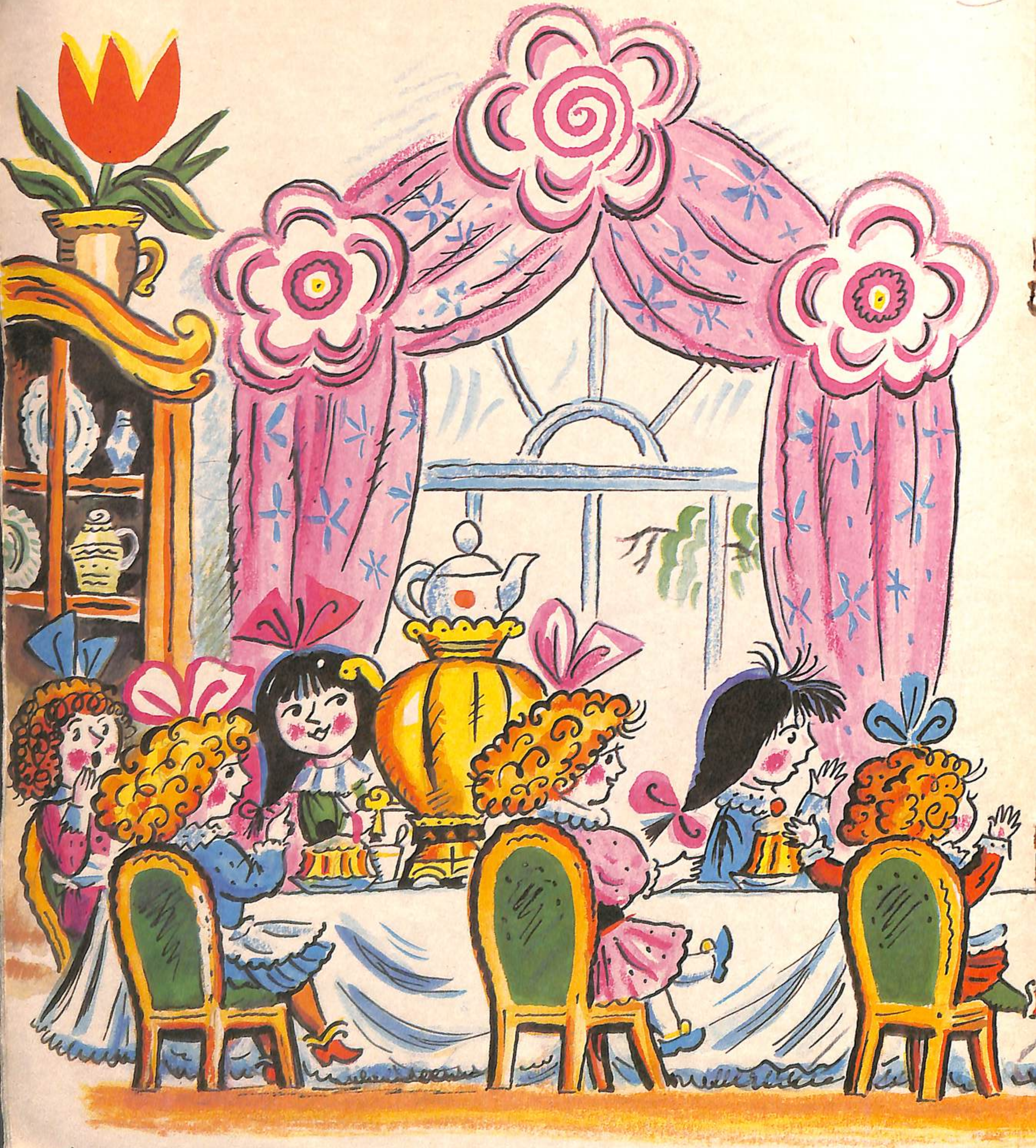
Dunno helped himself to another slice of tart.

"How did you make the balloon?" asked Cornflower.

"It was a lot of work, you may be sure. My helpers worked







day and night. Some of them smeared on the rubber, others worked the pump, and I just walked about whistling a tune – that is, not exactly whistling, but giving orders. Nobody could do a thing without me. I had to explain everything to them and show them what to do. A terrible responsibility. The balloon might have burst any minute. I have two assistants, Bendum and Twistum – expert tinkers. They can do anything with their hands, but not with their heads. Everything's got to be shown and explained to them. So I explained to them how to make the boiler. They made things hum. The boiler boiled, the water bubbled and the steam hissed out of the pipe! What a fuss there was!"

The girls listened to him with bated breath.

"What then? What happened next?" they asked when he paused.

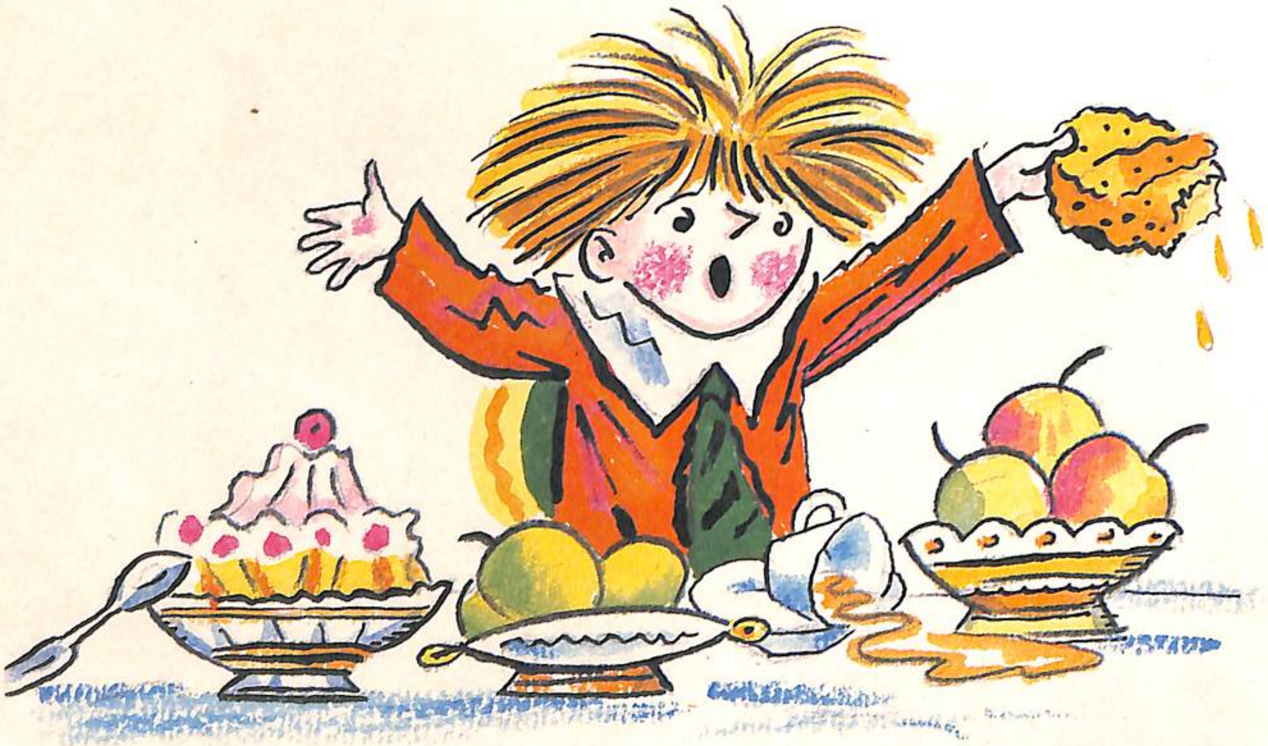
"At last came the day when we were to take off," went on Dunno. "Thousands of Mites came to see it. Some of them said



the balloon was sure to rise, others said it wouldn't, and a fight began. The ones who said it would, pounded those who said it wouldn't, and those who said it wouldn't pounded those who said it would. Or maybe it was just the opposite, or maybe it was the other way round. In a word, you couldn't tell who was pounding whom. Everybody was pounding everybody else."

"That doesn't matter," said Cornflower. "Don't bother about the fight, tell us about the balloon."

"Very well," said Dunno. "While they were fighting, we



climbed into the basket. Before we took off I made a little speech about how we were taking off and would be away for a long time and said good-bye. Then off we went, up and up, until the ground down below didn't look any bigger than this jam tart."

"Not really!" gasped the girl-Mites.

"Honest to goodness," said Dunno.

"Don't interrupt!" said Cornflower crossly. "You're holding up the story. He wouldn't fib to us."

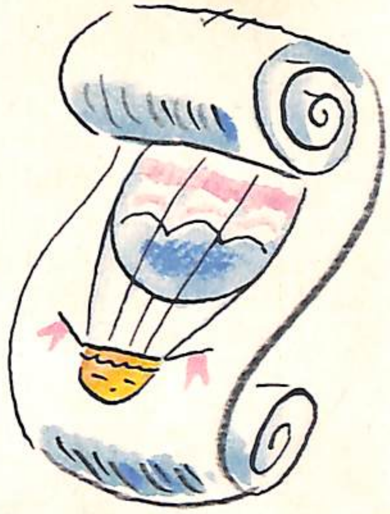
"True," said Dunno, "you really shouldn't interrupt my fibbing ... that is, my story."

"Go on, go on!" they all cried in chorus.

"So this is how it was," said Dunno. "We were sailing up and up, higher and higher, and then, all of a sudden – bang! The balloon came to a dead stop. We had bumped into a cloud. What were we to do? It didn't take me long to decide. I took out my axe and chopped a hole in the cloud. We started climbing again, but this time we were sailing upside down – the sky under our feet, the ground over our heads."

"Why was that?" asked his astonished listeners.

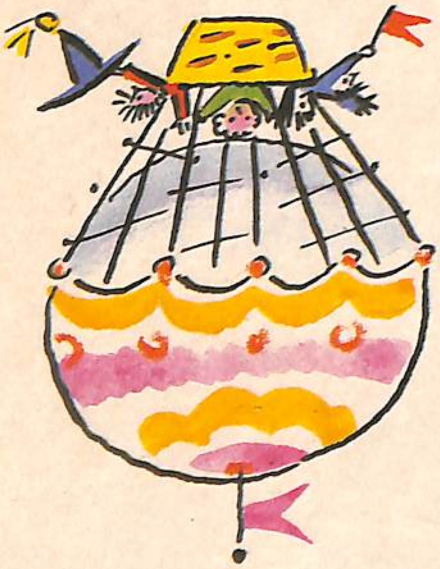
"A law of nature," said Dunno. "Once you're up above the clouds, you fly upside down. On we went, up and up, till we got to the very top, and there it's cold as cold – one thousand and one-tenths degrees below zero. Everything froze and the balloon cooled off and began to fall. But I'm a smart one, I am – I knew this would happen, and so I had put some sacks filled with sand in the balloon beforehand, and we threw them out, one after another, until they were all gone, but still the balloon kept falling. What were we to do? There was a fellow with us named Doono – a bit of a funk. When he saw the balloon falling he got scared and began to cry, and then all of a sudden he took a parachute and















jumped out and went home. The basket was lighter and the balloon began to rise into the air again. But this didn't last long. Down it came, lickety-split. It crashed into the earth! It bounced up again! Then it crashed down again! And out I fell – plop! – right on my head."

Dunno was so carried away by his story that he brought his fist down on his plate, sending the jam out of the tart flying in all directions. The girl-Mites gave such a start that they almost fell off their chairs.

"What happened next?" they asked when they had recovered.

"That's all I remember."

For a moment nobody said a word. The girl-Mites just sat there looking at Dunno in awe. He was a true hero in their eyes.

"Your balloon gave us an awful fright," said Cornflower at last. "We were having tea out on the balcony when we saw an enormous balloon sailing down on our house. All of a sudden it bumped into the fence and burst. Bang! We rushed over to it, but the only thing we found was a birchbark basket."

"You were lying on the ground as if dead," put in Bunny.

"One of your boots was on your foot, the other on the fence, and your hat was hanging on the branch of a tree," added Chippy.

"One sleeve was torn off your jacket and we found it only this morning," said Flitty. "We had to sew it back in a great hurry."

"How did I get in bed?" asked Dunno.

"We put you there. We couldn't leave you on the ground all night," said Cornflower.

"You were as good as dead," said Bunny. "But Honeysuckle said you were sure to come back to life because you had a strong ... what do you call it?... con-sti-too-tion."

"True, I've got a strong constitution, but my head's even stronger," boasted Dunno. "Anyone else in my place would have been sure to get percussion of the brain."

"Not percussion – concussion," corrected Cornflower.

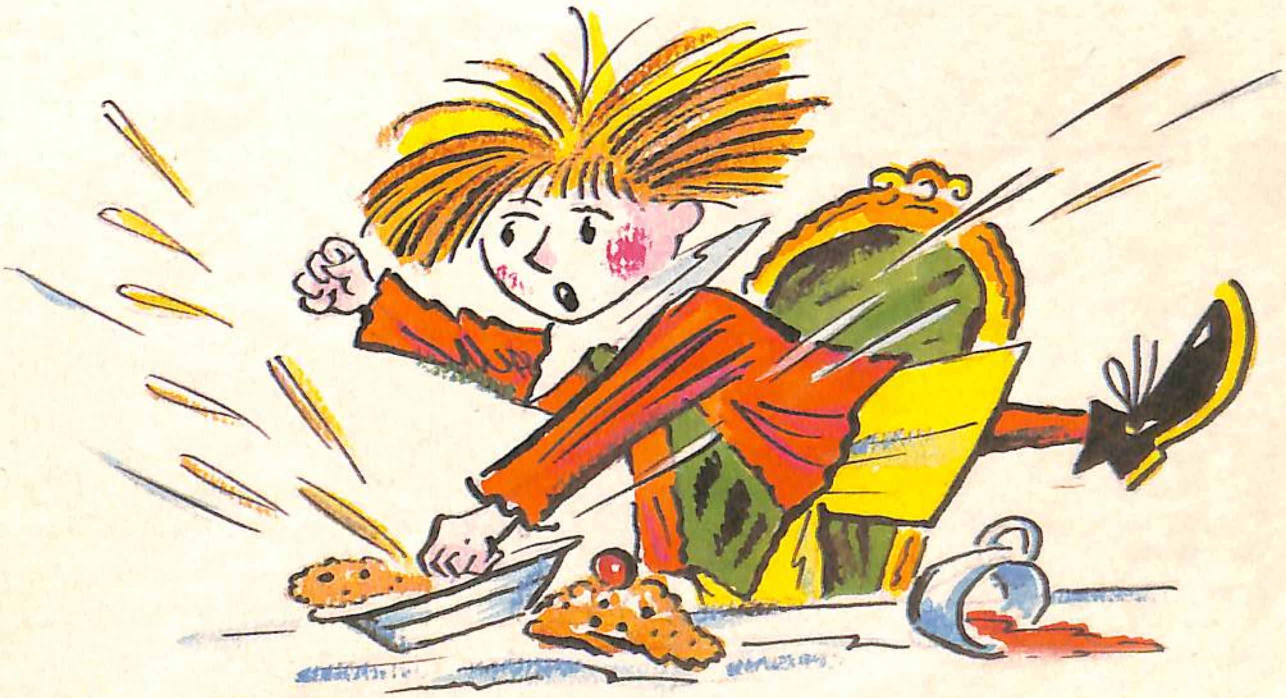
"That's right – concussion," agreed Dunno.

"But I thought you said you weren't alone in the balloon?" said Cornflower.

"I wasn't. There were sixteen of us. Doono, it's true, jumped out, but that left fifteen."

"Where are they?" asked Minny.

"Don't know," said Dunno with a shrug of his shoulders.





"Didn't you find anybody in the basket?"

"The only thing we found in the basket was a box of paints and a doctor's bag."

"The paints belong to Blobs and the bag to Dr. Pillman," said Dunno.

At that moment the door opened and Snowdrop ran into the room.

"Have you heard the news?" she cried. "The very newest of news! Another balloon has come down and burst. There were fourteen boy-Mites in it. They fell last night on the edge of town and our girls found them early this morning and helped them get to the hospital."

"And are they all hurt?" gasped Chippy.

"Not badly," said Snowdrop with a wave of her hand. "Honeysuckle says she'll put them all back on their feet."

"They must be my friends," said Dunno. "I'll go directly to the hospital and find out."

"I'll go with you," said Cornflower.

"I will too," said Snowdrop.

It was then that she noticed the circle of plaster on Cornflower's forehead.

"Oh, my dear! How sweet it looks!" she cried. "I want to wear a piece, too. Is it the latest thing?"

"Of course not," sniffed Cornflower. "It's plaster. I happened to bump my head."

"Oh, is that all?" said Snowdrop disappointedly as she went over to the looking-glass and put on her hat.

In a minute the room was empty. Everyone had run off to tell the news to the neighbours.



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РАЗГОВОР ЗА СТОЛОМ
На английском языке



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You can read about more adventures of Dunno and his friends from Flower Town in *A Walk About Town* and *In the Hospital*

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